International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation
Vol. 13, Issue 26, 2026
ISSN (print): 2392 – 6252
eISSN (online): 2393 – 0373
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.24563957

LEADERSHIP THAT HURTS: THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINIST AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Nicolan Stefaan GOVENDER*[1]
University of Johannesburg
Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Management

Sadi SEYAMA-MOKHANELI
University of Johannesburg
Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Management

Abstract

This article explores how hegemonic masculinist authoritarian school leadership influences the holistic wellbeing of South African educators by examining their lived experiences within restrictive and control-oriented educational environments. Drawing on qualitative narratives from Post Level 1 (PL1) educators who do not hold formal positions of school leadership, the study further examines how school leaders' leadership practices characterised by unilateral decision-making, fear-based control and limited support shape educators' physical, emotional and psychological experiences. The study's findings indicate that hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership functions as a chronic organisational stressor, producing embodied impacts such as health challenges, emotional distress and anxiety, fear and diminished professional self-worth. These negative effects on PL1 educators' wellbeing are compounded by workplace conditions that restrict participation in decision-making and environments that normalise distress. This indicates that PL1 educator wellbeing challenges are not isolated phenomena but are structurally reproduced by hegemonic masculinist authoritarian school leaders. The research highlights that educators' wellbeing is deeply connected to school leadership praxis. This suggests that critical leadership approaches which prioritise relational

* Corresponding Author, steffangovender@gmail.com, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa.

ethics and participation are essential requirements for sustaining PL1 educator wellbeing. The study contributes to educational leadership and management scholarship by reframing PL1 educator wellbeing as an organisational and ethical concern. The article demonstrates how hegemonic masculinist authoritarian school leadership practices affect PL1 educators' holistic wellbeing. These insights have significant implications for school leadership development, educational policy and interventions aimed at fostering healthier and more humane school environments within the South African context, and beyond.

Keywords: ***Authoritarian Leadership, Critical Leadership, Educator Wellbeing, Hegemonic, Masculinist, PL1 Educators, Power, School Leadership, SMT.***

Introduction

School leaders' provision of leadership and management has a lasting impact and influence on PL1 educators' performance, engagement, and professional expectations (Du, Li & Luo, 2020; Peker, Inandi & Gilic, 2018). Many South African PL1 educators experience the brute force of hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership, which is a direct determinant of educator wellbeing (Naicker & Mestry, 2013). Despite the attainment of democracy over thirty years ago (Sibanda, 2017), the ingrained apartheid-style organisational culture of hegemonic masculinist authoritarian school leadership largely affects PL1 educators' autonomy, consequently taking a serious toll on them physically, emotionally and psychologically (Sibanda, 2017). PL1 educators experience authoritarian leadership that demands unquestioned compliance and bullying. This perpetuates the characteristics of traditional power conceptions and hegemonic masculinity (Adeyemi, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity is the culturally dominant form of masculinity that legitimises authority, control and asymmetrical power relations over others (Akkaya, 2020).

PL1 educator wellbeing has emerged as a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness, influencing teacher retention and the overall quality of teaching and learning experiences for learners in the classroom. In concurrence, Caillier (2020) maintains that PL1 educator wellbeing is inherently multidimensional, encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological facets and is deeply influenced by relational and organisational factors. School leadership has been widely acknowledged as a central determinant of educational outcomes, exerting profound influence over the conditions wherein educators operate and their capacity to perform sustainably under these conditions (Imhangbe, Okecha & Obozuwa, 2019). Leadership praxis does not merely structure organisational functioning; they also shape the lived experiences and realities of PL1 educators, influencing their personal and professional

identities. While democratic and participatory forms of school leadership are often associated with enhanced educator wellbeing, less attention has been provided to the negative ramifications of hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership, which relies on unilateral decision-making and fear-based control (Nadarasa & Thuraisingam, 2012).

Hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership is especially identified within postcolonial Global South contexts, where hierarchical governance and legacies of centralised control sustain authoritarian leadership. PL1 educators operate in environments marked by limited support and fear-based regulation (Akgul, 2013), normalising distress. The embodied and psychological consequences for many South African PL1 educators remain underexamined, particularly from PL educators' lived experiences. This gap obscures the holistic impact on PL1 educators' performance, autonomy, agency, and overall job satisfaction.

This article therefore examines how hegemonic masculinist authoritarian school leadership, in some schooling contexts in South Africa, affects PL1 educators' physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing through qualitative phenomenological PL1 narratives. A phenomenological lens shows leadership as a chronic organisational stressor that causes emotional distress and psychological vulnerability, eroding PL1 educators' holistic wellbeing over time. The study contributes by evidencing these consequences and positioning PL1 educator wellbeing as an ethical and non-negotiable imperative. The article offers critical leadership as an alternative leadership medium through which school leaders could enact their leadership.

Literature Review

Hegemonic Masculinity and Authoritarian School Leadership

Masculinity, often conceptualised as masculinism, is not a fixed biological attribute but a socially constructed configuration of practices, norms and power relations that shape how men are expected to behave, lead and exercise authority within specific historical and institutional contexts (Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 1994; Gough, 2016). Central to masculinity theory is the concept of hegemonic masculinity, first conceptualised by Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) and later extensively theorised by Connell (1996) and Connell (2005), which demonstrates how particular forms of masculinity come to dominate others and secure the consent of both men and women in sustaining gendered hierarchies and inequalities. Hegemonic masculinity privileges traits such as dominance, control, and authority, positioning these characteristics as

legitimate and desirable while subordinating women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalised communities and identities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity goes beyond sex or gender because it is concerned with character traits, rather than sex or gender. Hegemonic masculinity is simply attributes or traits that are not restricted or constrained by any one sex or gender. This understanding is central to this article, as the article, by no means, aims to single out a particular gender. Importantly, hegemonic masculinity does not describe the behaviour of a particular sex or gender but operates as an ideological standard that legitimises unequal power relations and normalises domination. Scholars argue that hegemonic masculinity is reproduced in institutions such as schools and leadership systems that valorise hierarchy, unquestioned compliance and unilateral decision-making (Acker, 1990; Morrell, 2001).

In many South African schools, masculinist leadership practices are often enacted through hegemonic masculinist authoritarian control, silencing of dissent and the strategic use of fear and intimidation. These practices are framed as efficiency but function as mechanisms of power maintenance (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Hearn, 2015). These practices carry profound human consequences and embodied wellbeing concerns among subordinates (Connell, 2005; Morrell & Swart, 2005). Although contemporary scholarship recognises the fluidity of masculinities, hegemonic masculinity remains resilient, adapting to changing social conditions while continuing to legitimise asymmetrical and hierarchical power relations (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As such, hegemonic masculinity offers an analytical lens for understanding how authoritarian leadership practices in South African schools are normalised and sustained, producing emotional and psychological harm to PL1 educators (Sibanda, 2015).

Critical Perspectives of Power

Critical perspectives on organisational power locate the concept of power not as a neutral or technical phenomenon but as a relational force embedded within social structures and institutional practices. Early theorisation by Antonio Gramsci foregrounded power as hegemonic, operating through “relations of force” wherein dominant groups secure consent and compliance from subordinated populations (Daldal, 2014). Rooted in Marxist analysis, Gramsci’s conceptualisation of power emphasised how state and organisational power is normalised and sustained through ideological domination rather than overt coercion alone. Building on this critical tradition, Michel Foucault reconceptualised power as productive,

arguing that power is exercised through social relations and enacted as "a way in which certain actions modify others" (Foucault, 1982, p.788). For Foucault (1982), power does not merely reside in individuals or positions but traverses practices and interactions, implicating both those who exercise power and those who are subordinated by it. Notably, Foucault (1982) contended that power presupposes freedom, as members in an organisation may either assent to subjectification or attempt to reject domination through behaviours of defiance and counter-conduct (Daldal, 2014).

Extending Foucauldian thought, Ladkin and Probert (2021) argue that power cannot be accumulated or possessed but emerges through relational interactions amongst and within specific social fields in organisations. They contend that leaders are inseparable from their contexts and that power effects are inherently indeterminate because those subjected to power remain free agents that are capable of resistance themselves. This relational framing disrupts simplistic leader-centric accounts of power and centralises the role of followers in sustaining or challenging powerholders. Similarly, Fleming and Spicer (2014) maintain that leadership power is contingent upon subordinate acceptance, suggesting that power asymmetries persist mainly through the tacit and expected compliance of individuals positioned as less powerful. From a critical leadership perspective, school leaders are simultaneously powerful and constrained, occupying contradictory positions within hierarchical organisational structures (Ladkin & Probert, 2021).

Critical scholars further argue against and debate managerialist assumptions that present power as legitimate and rational. Deetz (1992) contends that managerialism functions as a primary medium for power enactment, obscuring domination through discourses of efficiency and control. Power, he argues, is neither fixed nor absolute but contingent and susceptible to loss by powerholders. Echoing this view, Lumby (2018) highlights how leaders shape organisational ethos and culture through power while often denying its fundamental uses. Joullie, Gould, Spillane and Luc (2021) caution that school leaders' conscious manipulation of power may inadvertently lead to destabilising their authority. This reinforces the fragile and relational nature of organisational power.

Authoritarian Leadership enacted in South African public Schools

Leadership within organisational contexts, such as South African public schools, is inherently variable, with leaders adopting leadership styles influenced by personal background, expertise,

personality and the scope of managerial authority (Adeyemi, 2010; Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015). Leadership styles exist along a spectrum, ranging from highly hegemonic masculinist autocratic control to carefree, laissez-faire autonomy. Leaders often exercise combinations of leadership styles contingent upon institutional disparities and dynamics (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Adeyemi, 2010). Among these, hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership, synonymous with autocratic leadership, remains pervasive, particularly among individuals occupying positions of centralised power. Early scholarship characterises authoritarian leaders as emotionally distant and power-seeking, often hostile to minority groups, resistant to change and opposed to humanitarian values (Stogdill & Bass, 1981; Bass & Bass, 2008). Authoritarian leaders exercise strict control through domination, expecting unquestioned compliance from subordinates (Dinham & Scott, 2008; Peker et al., 2018; Du, Li & Luo, 2020).

The historical conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership can be traced to Lewin, Lippitt and White's (1939) seminal social psychological experiments, which differentiated authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire styles through the observation of interactions within children's groups. Lewin et al. (1939) demonstrated that authoritarian leaders direct all decisions, assign tasks and maintain strict behavioural control, resulting in subordinate confusion, aggression and dependence on the leader as a 'hero'. In contrast, democratic and laissez-faire leadership fostered participation, autonomy and engagement (Lewin et al., 1939). Psychodynamic, evolutionary and developmental theorists have further interrogated authoritarian leadership: Freud (1939), Freud (1961) and Bowlby (1983) link authoritarian tendencies to parental attachment and power-seeking dynamics; Fromm (1941) situates authority within concentrated relational power; while Johnstone and Manica (2011) highlight evolutionary imperatives of subordination and group cohesion. These frameworks collectively suggest that authoritarian leadership in South African schools is embedded in both individual dispositions and organisational structures.

Within educational contexts, authoritarian leadership has been widely critiqued for its deleterious effects on staff autonomy and PL1 educator job satisfaction (Adeyemi, 2010; Naicker & Mestry, 2013; Sibanda, 2017; Imhangbe et al., 2019). South African school principals and School Management Teams (SMTs) who exercise centralised, non-participative authority often neglect the perspectives and needs of PL1 educators and learners (Chukwusa, 2018; Peker et al., 2018), resulting in diminished morale and increased turnover (Callier, 2020).

While authoritarian leadership may be justified in contexts requiring rapid decision-making, such as emergencies or crises (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Aruzie, Adjei, Mensah, Nkansah, Anorkyewaa, & Frimpong, 2018); its application in schools, which necessitate collaborative decision-making and inclusive vision-setting, is largely inappropriate (Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi, Shaikh, 2012; Nadarasa & Thuraisingam, 2012).

Authoritarian leadership is deeply intertwined with hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal power structures (Purwanto, Wijayanti, Hyun & Asbari, 2019; Donaldson, 1993; Akgul, 2013). Leaders adhering to hegemonic norms emphasise aggression and domination over women, weaker men and less powerful subordinates. In South African schools, such leadership undermines participatory governance and diminishes educators' agency, leading to the compromise of organisational effectiveness (Naicker & Mestry, 2013; Sibanda, 2017). Consequently, authoritarian leadership is increasingly regarded as an archaic and counterproductive approach in contemporary educational systems, incompatible with democratic and critical leadership principles that foreground staff wellbeing and collaborative professional cultures (Caillier, 2020).

Critical Leadership as a Response to Authoritarian Leadership in South African Public Schools

The persistence of authoritarian leadership in South African schools, underpinned by hegemonic masculinist principles, has entrenched asymmetries of power between SMTs and PL1 educators, thereby negatively impacting their holistic wellbeing. Such leadership practices, characterised by centralised authority and unilateral decision-making, necessitate a reconsideration of leadership paradigms and practices that promote emancipation and inclusivity. Critical leadership theory, situated within the radical humanist paradigm, offers a conceptual and empirical framework to interrogate these dynamics by foregrounding emancipation (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018; Collinson, 2011). In contrast to mainstream leadership approaches, Critical Leadership Studies (CLS) challenge hegemonic, masculinist and authoritarian leadership practices by questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions of power and positional authority within organisations (Collinson, 2011; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). This theoretical lens emphasises leadership as relational rather than the domain of a singular, heroic individual, thereby aligning with post-modern educational imperatives that advocate for inclusivity and shared decision-making within organisations.

Critical Management Studies (CMS), emerging from Critical Theory (CT) developed by scholars of the Frankfurt School, including Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Habermas and Foucault, provides the intellectual scaffolding for CLS (Alvesson & Willmott, 2003; Alvesson & Willmott, 2012). CMS critiques managerialism and the authoritarian tendencies of organisational hierarchies, emphasising three foundational propositions: anti-performativity, denaturalisation and reflexivity (Fournier & Grey, 2000; Grey & Willmott, 2005). Anti-performativity fundamentally rejects managerial practices that prioritise efficiency over human emancipation, while critical performativity offers a moderated approach aimed at subverting hegemonic leadership norms through affirmation and care (Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). These frameworks advocate for leadership that is dialogical and emancipatory, thus countering asymmetrical authoritarian leadership structures that dominate in many South African schools.

The critique of mainstream leadership theories is central to CLS. Historical models, including the Great Man theory and the Traits theory, have often prioritised positional power, which reproduces hierarchical norms in organisations (Carlyle, 1841; Bass, 1981; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Thompson & Glaso, 2015). Such approaches elevate the leader above followers, creating environments susceptible to hegemonic masculinist authoritarianism. Even ostensibly progressive models, such as post-heroic leadership, transactional leadership and transformational leadership, retain vestiges of centralised and dominating power by emphasising leaders' influence over followers, thereby perpetuating structural domination over PL1 educator autonomy (Fletcher, 2004; Kelan & Wratil, 2018; Sobral & Furtado, 2019; Tourish, 2014; Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999).

In response, critical leadership theory advances a paradigm in which leadership is contextually situated and relational in nature. By decentralising power, CLS promotes emancipatory practices that foreground collective decision-making (Collinson, 1988; Collinson, 2005; Ryan, 1998; Geuss, 2008; Learmonth & Morrell, 2007). Principles such as leadership-on-demand and dialogical engagement enable stakeholders within educational institutions to challenge and dismantle entrenched authoritarian norms while fostering critical thinking (Alvesson & Svenningson, 2003; Gagnon & Collinson, 2014). In this regard, CLT not only problematises the limitations of hegemonic masculinist leadership but also provides actionable and attainable insights for emancipating school leadership practices.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

A qualitative research methodology underpinned the study, as it prioritises the lived meanings and experiences of participants (Patton, 2002; Denzin, Lincoln & Giardina, 2006). Qualitative inquiry occurs in naturalistic settings and emphasises depth of understanding over generalisability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This methodology aligned with the study's purpose of exploring how authoritarian leadership, grounded in hegemonic masculinity, influenced PL1 educators' holistic wellbeing and job satisfaction.

The study employed an interpretive phenomenological approach to explore the nuances of educators' lived experiences. Phenomenology, rooted in Heideggerian philosophy, focuses on how individuals perceive and make meaning of phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012). Interpretive phenomenology builds on this by seeking to uncover deeper meanings of experience through hermeneutic interpretation rather than simple, verbatim description (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This approach enabled the researcher to explore participants' subjective and authentic experiences of authoritarian leadership.

Research Paradigm

The study was guided by the radical humanist paradigm, a critical orientation that foregrounds power and subjective realities, making it well suited to examine how authoritarian leadership and hegemonic masculinist power were experienced by PL1 educators (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). By focusing on domination, this paradigm provided a lens through which the effects of power could be critically explored (Burrell & Morgan, 2017; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018).

Sampling

Participants were purposively sampled to ensure that the data were rich and contextually meaningful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of individuals who have substantial experience and knowledge of the phenomenon being explored (Yin, 2016). Ten PL1 educators were recruited from South African public schools. None of the participants held formal leadership positions, ensuring that the focus remained on the first-hand experiences of authoritarian leadership on PL1 educators. The sample included

diverse nationalities and ages, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. An asterisk has been placed before participants' names to indicate that pseudonyms are utilised with the aim of protecting participants' identities.

Table 1: Summary of the biographical details of the participants

No.	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Qualification/s	Teaching Experience (In Years)	Nationality
1. 1.	*Tom	50	M	B. Ed Honours	28 years	South African
2. 2.	*Melissa	40	F	B. Ed Honours	19 years	South African
3. 3.	*Zena	29	F	B. Ed Honours	5 years	South African
4. 4.	*Thandi	30	F	B. Science, PGCE, B. Ed Honours	6 years	South African
5. 5.	*Mavis	34	F	PGCE	6 years	South African
6. 6.	*Hillary	47	F	HDE	23 years	South African
7. 7.	*Sam	27	F	B. Ed Honours	5 years	South African
8. 8.	*Layla	45	F	B. Ed Honours	22 years	Zimbabwean
9. 9.	*Tarana	29	F	B. Ed	7 years	South African
10.	*Farhana	49	F	B. Physical Science	25 years	South African

Data Collection

Data were generated through semi-structured individual interviews, allowing participants to express their experiences in their own words while enabling the researcher to probe for depth and clarity (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview schedule included questions about participants' conceptualisations of power, experiences of hegemonic masculinity and the marring effects of authoritarian leadership on their professional engagement. Interviews were conducted in person or via online platforms, recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim. Member checking, document analysis and field notes enhanced credibility and ensured triangulation. Figure 1 below denotes the data collection procedures followed by the researcher.

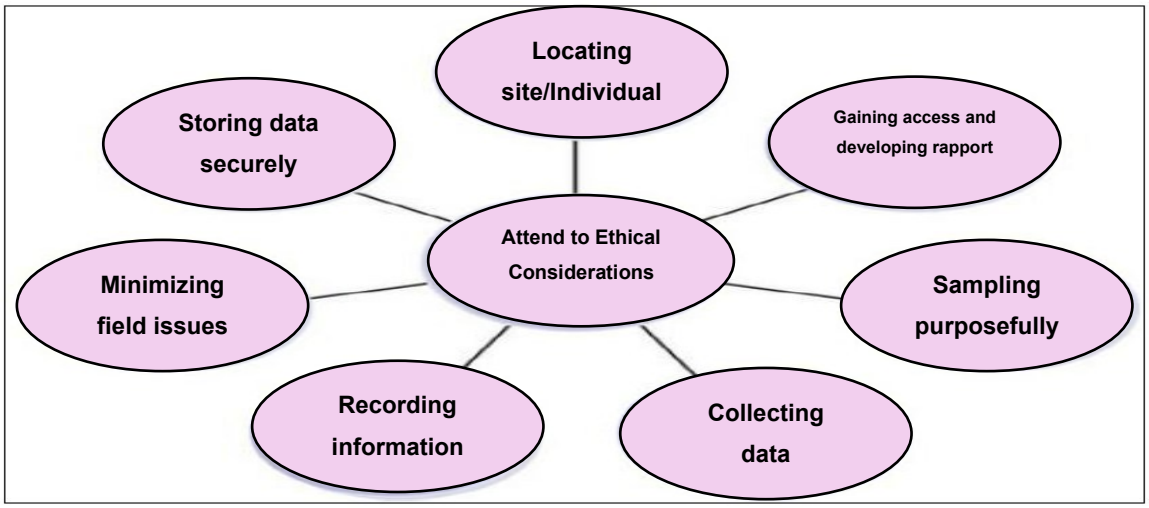

Figure 1: Data Collection Activities (adapted from Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 214)

Data Analysis

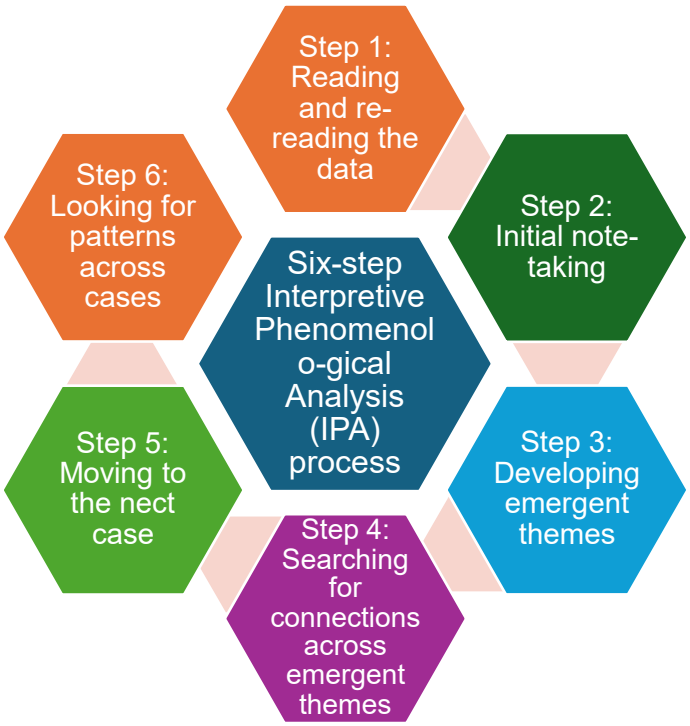

Figure 2: A diagrammatic representation of the Six-step Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) process (Adapted from Smith et al., 2009, pp. 80-81)

Data were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which involves iterative coding, theme development, and interpretive engagement to derive meaning from participants' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The theoretical

lens of masculinity guided the interpretation, allowing the study to reveal how authoritarian practices shaped by hegemonic masculinist power are experienced and understood by PL1 educators. The following diagram offers a visual representation of the data analysis process underpinned by Smith et al. (2009), which was followed during the data analysis process:

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility was achieved through member checking. Through detailed contextual description, transferability was achieved. Dependability was ensured by transparent documentation of research procedures through consultations with an academic supervisor and confirmability was established through grounding the findings in participants' voices and corroborating evidence through member checking and supervisor debriefing sessions.

Limitations of The Study

The researcher encountered study limitations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Time constraints and power outages necessitated the rescheduling of interviews, while the small sample size, appropriate for phenomenological inquiry, limited broader applicability. In addition, there was a gender imbalance with nine female and one male participant, which constrained the exploration of nuanced gender-specific experiences by men. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the enactment of authoritarian leadership rooted in hegemonic masculinity and its influence on PL1 educators' holistic wellbeing.

Study Strengths

The qualitative and phenomenological approach of the study strengthened the quality of the data by ensuring that the lived experiences of participants were captured in critical detail, offering deep, thick, and rich descriptions of the experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach offered nuanced and fundamental empirical conceptualisations of the phenomenon under examination, which aided in the enhancement of the credibility of the data collected. To address potential researcher bias, the researcher maintained reflexivity through supervisor debriefing sessions and member checking directly with participants of the study

(Smith et al., 2009). The meticulous ethical considerations upheld while the study was conducted reinforced the trustworthiness of the study.

Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical protocols were strictly observed whilst conducting this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Ethical clearance was obtained from the university's Ethics Committee, and permission was granted by Provincial educational authorities. Informed consent was secured from participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage in accordance with university protocols for data protection and integrity. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the study without consequence.

Findings and Discussion

Power Bases in Schools – The "Five-Headed Monster"

After purposively recruiting and interviewing ten participants who experienced authoritarian leadership, it became evident that individuals who hold authority enact their power through what the study conceptualises as the "five-headed monster." This metaphor aptly captures the multi-faceted ways in which power manifests through authoritarian school leaders in South African school settings. Drawing on French and Raven's (1952) classic framework of the bases of power, the five heads of the monster include legitimate, connection, expert, reward and coercive power. Participants' lived experiences demonstrated and actualised the five-headed monster in practice.

Participants consistently identified School Management Team (SMT) members and School Governing Body (SGB) members as primary holders of legitimate power, which is derived from formally appointed positions. The hierarchical distribution of power was noted to concentrate authority at the apex, with principals, deputy principals and departmental heads wielding significant control. Tom observed:

"I think they would be the SMT members, especially and the principal as well." (*Tom)

Similarly, *Hillary emphasised the top-down nature of legitimate power:

"So, I would say principal, deputies and HODs. Those are the three main pillars in management that we fall under. They are the ones able to determine and control what's happening." (*Hillary)

*Zena reinforced this perception of hierarchical control:

"... Having control over the school would then be the main director. ... And then you would find your principals or our principal at our school and then our deputy principal, as well as our, our HODs…" (*Zena)

While most participants focused on the principal and SMT as central to legitimate power, *Mavis highlighted that vice principals could also exert considerable influence:

"They also include the positions, especially the vice principals, they do have power for me, they can, they are able to influence the principal…" (*Mavis)

The second head, connection power, emerged from participants' accounts of relational and affiliative influence. *Tarana described how connections demonstrate power:

*"Mrs. *Kane ... She's the drama teacher; she is now acting deputy principal. So, the acting current principal now is obligated to her because of all the things that she does. And that's how she's obtained her power."* (*Tarana)

Tarana further articulated the transactional and reciprocal nature of connection power:

"...[She] will make gifts for people, give them free tickets to ... shows, where they feel like they're obligated to her now in terms of this. So, the current acting principal is now obligated to her because of all the things that she does." (*Tarana)

Participants also recognised how volunteering for additional responsibilities or demonstrating loyalty could translate to power and influence. *Hillary explained:

"People who volunteer to be in the SGB abuse their power and talk down to us, even when it comes to capturing our marks. They talk authoritatively." (*Hillary)

The third head, expert power, was closely linked to professional experience and knowledge. *Sam reflected on the power dynamics associated with age and experience:

"And I feel like it has a lot to do with age. So, she's very close to retirement. And I'm obviously 27. So, I feel like there's kind of that abuse of power in terms of age dynamics, because she always seems to undermine me and assume that I don't know what I'm doing because I'm so much younger." (*Sam)

*Mavis echoed this, highlighting the authority of long-serving educators:

"The individual that holds power for me, it's the people that have been in the school for a long time." (*Mavis)

Reward power, the fourth head, was experienced as a mechanism of inducement and selective nepotism and bias. *Tarana described how wealth and gift-giving were used strategically:

"The main individual who uses her tactics for power is she uses her wealth, like, she has this box at home, where [if she buys like things], she puts it in there.... But what she does is she will buy like, like cheap things for you. But obviously expensive things for the people she likes to keep in the books, certain people; she only keeps good to her because they are of use to her." (*Tarana)

Finally, coercive power, the fifth head, was described as the most fundamentally oppressive and detrimental head of power to PL1 educators' wellbeing. *Farhana noted:

"Their influence of power is that they can be very coercive. And people actually get into a position where they're scared, you know, they're scared to step out of line, they are scared to differ. And you're totally unhappy to the point where you have to... it's almost like you are forced... you leave." (*Farhana)

*Mavis further reflected on the compulsion associated with coercive power:

"So yeah, for example, when it's during meetings, sometimes we just get told before the end of the day that we have an urgent meeting. So, you have to attend to the meeting, whether you like it or not. ... I was saying even when I see no need of doing such work, you are still forced to do it." (*Mavis)

*Tom described the silencing effect of hegemonic authoritarian leadership on staff:

"I do have experience of authoritarian leadership. We must anxiously obey what the SMT want in a silent manner." (*Tom)

*Hillary similarly critiqued the coercive imposition of authority:

"When I get told, hey, we have a wonderful team, well done team. It annoys me. Because we're not a team. We just being forced and told what to do. And it really grates me when I hear this word, team. We are told what to do, when and how. So, we're not a team." (*Hillary)

Collectively, these participant accounts illustrate that the five-headed monster of power. French and Raven's (1952) theoretical framework is thus extended, demonstrating how hegemonic masculinist enactments of power can undermine the potentially constructive functions of organisational authority.

Power tactics employed by hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leaders to maintain their power

Participants were candid and forthcoming about the tactics employed by power holders to maintain dominance and control in these South African schools. These strategies were

consistently hegemonic, with severe negative impacts on PL1 educators' wellbeing. A central tactic reported across accounts was control through the instillation of fear. Coercive power, characterised by the threat of consequences, was described as detrimental to educators' sense of agency and being.

*Tom's experience highlights legitimacy as a tactic to enforce compliance:

"We have job descriptions and we have people expecting things from us at the district office. Out of the box solutions are given but not heard because this is expected of us and it's a question of you just have to toe the line." (*Tom)

Here, asymmetrical hierarchical structures provide stability to powerholders (Finkelstein, 1992) but constrain creativity and subordinate autonomy. *Farhana illustrated the use of rational persuasion to manipulate policy documents:

"You get called into the principal's office ... you [get] reprimanded like a child. ... Personally, I got called into the principal's office and then they will quote, the PAM document. And even the PAM document gets misquoted." (*Farhana)

This demonstrates how policy can be weaponised to control subordinates, consistent with Collinson's (2018) observations on the relational enactment of masculinist hegemonic power.

*Mavis described the use of exchange and pressure, where subordinates are made to perform work that belongs to leadership:

"For me, it's more like, we as teachers doing their job than them doing our job. So that's how they keep power, just making other people work and putting more work on them." (*Mavis)

She further emphasised the psychological impact on her by noting:

"I feel like I don't have any say." (*Mavis)

These experiences show how coercive workload allocation reinforces authority while undermining professional autonomy, thereby reproducing diminished self-worth.

Collectively, participants' accounts reveal that legitimacy and pressure are deployed to reinforce power asymmetries and enforce compliance. French and Raven's (1952) typology of power provides a useful framework to interpret these intersecting strategies. The hegemonic masculinist orientation of authoritarian leaders amplifies adverse consequences, producing stress, demotivation and diminished professional efficacy among PL1 educators.

The narratives of *Tom, *Farhana and *Mavis illustrate that hegemonic leaders maintain dominance through multifaceted power tactics, with sustained negative effects on their holistic wellbeing.

A gaping divide of power between the powerful and the powerless

A prominent theme that emerged from the data was the substantial divide of power between those who hold authority and those who do not. Participants' narratives revealed that hegemonic masculinist leadership creates environments where educators experience marginalisation. This divide is evident in the superficiality of organisational power sharing within these contexts.

Although education policies often advocate for distributed leadership, participants' lived experiences indicate that such power sharing is largely illusory. *Tom reflected on the limited influence afforded to him despite his role as a safeguarding officer:

"So, I told you that I was the child safeguarding person at school. … So, it doesn't give me power, but what I do think is that it gives me an opportunity to, to influence people…" (*Tom)

*Melissa similarly described her power as restricted to informal domains:

"…I think the extent of my power, if I can start will be the grade head from my grade, grade threes and then … the netball organiser, so I'm also the highest qualified umpire at the school. So, I do have quite a lot of power on the Netball field…" (*Melissa)

For many participants, centralised authority resulted in persistent powerlessness. *Hillary observed:

"I don't think I have power to... I have power over myself. But I don't think I have power to influence what happens in school. … My work life has just been horrible. … All I hear is quantity and demand and very unrealistic expectations with regards to time and how things are done." (*Hillary)

Similarly, *Layla recounted the exclusion from decision-making:

"…we just get a message that says, all foundation phase teachers must go for a workshop after school. … I just knew that I'm also not being respected. … It still comes back to being useless, powerless. … You get upset; you get angry. But there's nothing you can do at the end of the day." (*Layla)

The lack of support further reinforced feelings of disempowerment. *Zena explained:

"[T]here's a difference between supporting and actually offering guaranteed support. … There's a lack of support. So, you have to be dealing with management that's not supporting you … And it just creates so much anxiety…" (*Zena)

Participants also highlighted the absence of recognition and a toxic work environment. *Sam reflected:

"I feel undermined. I feel devalued. I feel belittled. … I feel underappreciated and actually feel really angry, hurt, demotivated. … I don't even want to make suggestions. Because what's the point?" (*Sam)

*Hillary emphasised the broader impact on morale:

"I feel I have no self-worth in the school. … The staff don't even get to enjoy each other. We [are] all just so busy." (*Hillary)

These narratives underscore that authoritarian school leaders operating from hegemonic masculinist perspectives centralise power, marginalise educators and foster environments that lack support. Collinson's (2018) assertion that organisational power is relational yet frequently unequally distributed is thus foregrounded. The resulting disempowerment has profound consequences for PL1 educators' professional wellbeing and sense of autonomy.

The torturous impact of authoritarian leadership on PL1 Educators' holistic wellbeing

Participants in the study were explicit about the torturous impact of hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership on their holistic wellbeing. The hegemonic masculinist orientations of these South African school leaders, characterised by centralised power and coercive control, were reported to have far-reaching effects on educators' physical, emotional and psychological health. Participants revealed that the stress and pressure imposed by these authoritarian leaders often necessitated medical intervention, counselling, or other coping mechanisms, highlighting the severity of the impact they have. These findings resonate with Collinson's (2018) assertion that hegemonic power is relational and can permeate the psychological and social fabric of organisational life, generating conditions that destabilise followers' holistic wellbeing.

Several participants addressed the physical consequences of enduring authoritarian leadership. *Tom described resorting to medication to manage anxiety induced by persistent workplace pressure:

"I have to ask for medication for anxiety, for you know nervousness." (*Tom)

Similarly, *Tarana indicated the physical toll of stress manifesting in tension headaches and the need for pain relief:

"Calmex, for a little bit, because of the tension headaches all the time and then now and then I actually take two Adcodol to bed if I have, like, a horrible day. And, you know, like, from all that thinking and being upset about it, yes, I come home and I have to take the Adcodol." (*Tarana)

*Mavis highlighted the compounded effects of stress, particularly during pregnancy, emphasising the invasive nature of work-related anxiety:

"I was growing up with a low self-esteem. So, if a leader comes, tells me the way I'm not doing my job, it does affect me. ... Sometimes I feel scared for my baby, because of the stress that I have. I hardly have time to rest. Even when I'm resting, I'm thinking about work. It also affects my relationships. Whenever I'm home, I need to think about Monday – I need to go back to that place." (*Mavis)

*Hillary further illustrated the physiological effects of sustained pressure, linking it to serious health conditions:

"I developed high blood pressure due to the job stress. ... Very minimal assistance with anything. So, my high blood pressure. Laryngitis ... I used B12 shots, to cope ... yeah." (*Hillary)

The emotional and psychological effects were equally severe. *Melissa described the emotional rollercoaster induced by constant scrutiny and unrealistic expectations, reflecting Collinson's (2018) argument that power is relational and psychologically enacted:

"Well, I'm known for wearing my heart on my sleeve. ... Sometimes it can get to you emotionally." (*Melissa)

*Thandi's experience illustrated the extreme emotional vulnerability caused by authoritarian leadership:

"Like there was a time where I actually cried. I cried, like I confronted her and cried; you know ... I cried. ... I should go in and also talk down on her, but I ended [up] having an emotional breakdown." (*Thandi)

Participants described the psychological strain of operating in a toxic environment. *Zena noted the sense of helplessness and lack of institutional support, which exacerbated anxiety and emotional distress:

"...being in a toxic work environment as that because it's almost like you, it's like you're drowning. People see that you are drowning, but nobody has ... the life jackets. They have a few that they can offer you here, but they choose not to ..." (*Zena)

*Mavis similarly described cognitive and attentional impairment caused by chronic stress, which affected her classroom performance and safety:

"The stress. I mean, I can't even concentrate in class. Sometimes I'll just black out and think of something and just wake up, kids calling me, Ma'am, ma'am. I'll just go to my own world." (*Mavis)

These narratives demonstrate that hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership in educational organisations in many South African schools, particularly when underpinned by hegemonic masculinity, imposes a severe and multidimensional burden on PL1 educators. Physical symptoms such as high blood pressure, headaches and anxiety, combined with emotional and psychological distress, highlight the severe and torturous impact on PL1 educators' holistic wellbeing. The experiences shared by *Tom, *Tarana, *Mavis, *Melissa, *Thandi, *Zena and *Hillary collectively reveal the human cost of hegemonic masculinist authoritarianism, thereby reinforcing the need for leadership approaches that prioritise relational ethics, psychological safety and supportive organisational cultures.

Implications for practice

The findings of this study call for a shift toward relational and ethical leadership that challenges hegemonic authoritarian masculinist power. School leaders should disrupt centralised decision-making through shared voice and professional agency. Emphasising transparency and care, leadership must move from compliance to trust, fostering cultures that prioritise PL1 educator wellbeing, as this may lead to the restoration of PL1 educators' autonomy and professional dignity.

Implications for policy

Within the context of South African education, the study's findings reveal a gap between policy rhetoric and persistent hierarchical control. Policy should enforce accountability for power distribution and leadership conduct. Legislative frameworks such as the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) should offer protection of PL1 educators and ensure ethical leadership standards.

Implications for sustainability

Sustaining critical leadership requires the dismantling of hegemonic masculinist power, simultaneously fostering cultures of equity which promote PL1 educators' agency and voice. Without reflexive praxis, hegemonic, authoritarian patterns of school leadership may persist

despite the democratic transformation that was achieved in 1994 in South Africa. Sustainability of critical leadership as an alternative to hegemonic masculinist authoritarian leadership depends on institutionalising critical leadership and collective accountability in schools. School leaders must critically recognise subtle and unsubtle power dynamics, prioritising educator wellbeing as central to harmonious schooling systems.

Recommendations for future research

Future research ought to examine interventions that disrupt hegemonic masculinist authoritarian power wielded by many school leaders and their impact on educator wellbeing. Longitudinal and comparative studies across diverse contexts can reveal how hegemonic masculinist authoritative power is enacted from the root, thereby attempting to circumvent its root causes. Intersectional analyses may also explore how gender, race, age and experience shape these hegemonic masculinist power dynamics. Research must also interrogate policy enactment at the grassroots level, include leaders' perspectives, and further examine how authoritarian leadership is constructed, sustained, and reproduced in schools.

Conclusion

This study reveals that SMTs within the sampled schooling contexts in South Africa remain deeply entrenched in authoritarian, hegemonic masculinist practices, with only superficial reform. There are minimal strides toward critical leadership endeavours. The persistence of coercive, reward-based, and legitimacy-driven power tactics erodes PL1 educators' wellbeing and professional engagement, fostering fear and compliance rather than collaboration in these schooling contexts. These South African school contexts silence teacher voice and constrain meaningful participation, which perpetuates toxic organisational cultures. Without the deliberate disruption and dismantling of these centralised hegemonic masculinist power structures, meaningful transformation will remain elusive. Advancing ethical and critical leadership demands systemic interventions at grassroots level that foreground critical consciousness. Future research needs to centralise actionable pathways that restore PL1 educator agency, wellbeing, and voice to catalyse sustainable critical leadership skills among South African school leaders.

References

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & society*, *4*(2), 139-158. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002

Adeyemi, T. O. (2010). The impact of leadership style on school climate and students' achievement in secondary schools in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, 2*(6), 83–91. https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEAPS

Akgul, E. (2013). Masculinity and leadership in educational institutions: A critical perspective. *Journal of Educational Leadership, 10*(3), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2012.754057

Akkaya, B. (2020). Review of leadership styles in perspective of dynamic capabilities: An empirical research on managers in manufacturing firms. *Journal of Administrative Sciences, 18*(36), 389-407. https://doi.org/10.35408/comuybd.681427

Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. (2012). Critical leadership studies: The case for critical performativity. *Human Relations, 65*(3), 367–390. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726711432278

Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (2003). *Studying management critically*. Sage.

Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (2012). *Making sense of management: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. (2003). *The great disappearing act: Difficulties in doing "leadership"*. Leadership, 1(1), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(03)00031-6

Amanchukwu, R. N., Stanley, G. J., & Ololube, N. P. (2015). A review of leadership theories, principles, styles and their relevance to educational management. *Management, 5*(1), 6–14. https://doi.org/10.5923/j.mm.20150501.02

Aruzie, R. S., Adjei, A., Mensah, D. A., Nkansah, I., Anorkyewaa, A. A. & Frimpong, B. O. (2018). The impact of leadership styles on teaching and learning outcomes: A case study of selected senior high schools in the Nkronza Districts of Brong Ahafo Region in Ghana. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management, 6*(12), 797-825. https://doi.org/doi:10.18535/ijsrm/v6i12.el02

Avolio, B. J., Bass, B. M., & Jung, D. I. (1999). Re-examining the components of transformational and transactional leadership using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 72*(4), 441–462. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317999166789

Bass, B. M. (1981). *Stogdill's handbook of leadership: A survey of theory and research*. Free Press.

Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2008). *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research and managerial applications* (4th ed.). Free Press.

Bhatti, T., Maitlo, G. M., Shaikh, N., Hashmi, N., & Shaikh, F. M. (2012). The impact of autocratic and democratic leadership style on job satisfaction. *International Business Research, 5*(2), 192–201. https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v5n2p192

Bowlby, J. (1983). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment* (2nd ed.). Basic Books.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (2017). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life* (Revised ed.). Routledge.

Caillier, G. J. (2020). Testing the influence of autocratic leadership, democratic leadership and public service motivation on citizen ratings of an Agency Head's performance. *Public Performance & Management Review, 43*(4), 918-941. https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/15309576.2020.1730919

Carlyle, T. (1841). *On heroes, hero-worship and the heroic in history*. James Fraser.

Carrigan, T., Connell, B. & Lee, J. (1985). Toward a new sociology of masculinity. *Theory and Society, 14*(5), 551-604. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00160017

Chukwusa, J. (2018). Authoritarian leadership and teacher morale in Nigerian schools. *African Educational Research Journal, 6*(2), 89–97. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/2019

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Collinson, D. L. (1988). Engineering humour: Masculinity, joking and conflict in shopfloor relations. *Organization Studies, 9*(2), 181–199. https://doi.org/10.1177/017084068800900204

Collinson, D. L. (2005). Dialectics of leadership. *Human Relations, 58*(11), 1419–1442. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726705061313

Collinson, D. L. (2011). Critical leadership studies. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson, & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of leadership* (pp. 181–194). Sage.

Collinson, D. L. (2018). Power, resistance and relational leadership: Understanding the human costs of authority. *Leadership, 14*(5), 523–540. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715018756742

Collinson, D., & Hearn, J. (1994). Naming men as men: Implications for work, organization and management. *Gender, Work & Organization, 1*(1), 2–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.1994.tb00001.x

Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1987). Toward a behavioural theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review, 12*(4), 637–647. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1987.4306715

Connell, R.W. (1996). New directions in gender theory, masculinity research and gender politics. *Ethnos, 61*(3-4), 157-176. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.1996.9981534

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). Berkley: University of California Press.

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society*, *19*(6), 829-859. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639

Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Daldal, A. (2014). Gramsci on power and hegemony. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 19*(2), 101–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2014.903178

Dahl, R. A. (1957). *The concept of power*. Behavioral Science, 2(3), 201–215. https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303

Deetz, S. (1992). Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in communication and the politics of everyday life. State University of New York Press.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage handbook of Qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sage.

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S. & Giardina, M. D. (2006). Disciplining qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *19*(6):769-782. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390600975990

Dinham, S., & Scott, C. (2008). School leadership in Australia. *School Leadership & Management, 28*(4), 317–330. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430802242217

Donaldson, G. A. (1993). *The curriculum leadership framework*. Allyn & Bacon.

Du, X., Li, J., & Luo, X. (2020). The impact of leadership style on employee well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1234. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01234

Finkelstein, S. (1992). Power in top management teams: Dimensions, measurement and validation. *Academy of Management Journal, 35*(3), 505–538. https://doi.org/10.5465/256485

Fletcher, J. K. (2004). The paradox of post-heroic leadership: Gender, power and transformational change. *Leadership Quarterly, 15*(5), 647–661. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.07.003

Foucault, M. (1982). *The subject and power*. Critical Inquiry, 8(4), 777–795. https://doi.org/10.1086/448181

Freud, S. (1939). *Moses and monotheism*. Hogarth Press.

Freud, S. (1961). *Civilization and its discontents* (J. Strachey, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1930)

Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from freedom*. Farrar & Rinehart.

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F. & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 36*(1), 717-732. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.01100.x

Fournier, V., & Grey, C. (2000). At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies. *Human Relations, 53*(1), 7–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700531003

French, J. R. P., & Raven, B. (1952). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). University of Michigan Press.

Fleming, P., & Spicer, A. (2014). *Power in management and organization*. Routledge.

Gagnon, S. & Collinson, D. (2014). Rethinking global leadership development programmes: The interrelated significance of power, context and identity. *Organisation Studies, 35*(5), 645-670. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840613509917

Geuss, R. (2008). *Philosophy and real politics*. Princeton University Press.

Gough, B. (2016). Understanding masculinities. In *Routledge handbook of masculinity studies* (pp. 1–15). Routledge.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage.

Grey, C., & Willmott, H. (2005). Critical management studies: A reader. Oxford University Press.

Gunbayi, I., & Sorm, V. (2018). Critical leadership and school transformation. *International Journal of Educational Management, 32*(7), 1214–1228. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2018-0101

Hearn, J. (2015). Gendering leadership. In *The Routledge companion to leadership* (pp. 123–136). Routledge.

Imhangbe, O. S., Okecha, R. E., & Obozuwa, J. (2019). Principals' leadership styles and teachers' job performance: Evidence from Edo State, Nigeria. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 47*(6), 909–924. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218764178

Johnstone, R., & Manica, A. (2011). Evolutionary perspectives on authority and hierarchy. *Biological Theory, 6*(1), 25–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13752-011-0007-2

Joullie, J., Gould, A. M., Spillane, R. & Luc, S. (2021). The language of power and authority in leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 32*(1):1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101491

Kelan, E. K., & Wratil, P. (2018). The gendered dynamics of leadership: A critical perspective. *Gender in Management, 33*(2), 102–118. https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-09-2017-0093

Kimmel, M. S., Hearn, J., & Connell, R. W. (2004). *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities*. Sage.

Ladkin, D., & Probert, J. (2021). Relational perspectives on leadership and power. *Leadership, 17*(2), 135–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715020919035

Learmonth, M., & Morrell, K. (2007). *Critical leadership studies: The case for critical performativity*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewin, K., Lippitt, R., & White, R. K. (1939). Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social climates. *Journal of Social Psychology, 10*(2), 269–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1939.9713366

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research, 14*(5), 726–735. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304263638

Lumby, J. (2018). Leadership, power and followership in education. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(2), 196–210. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217717717

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Morrell, R. (2001). *Changing men in Southern Africa*. Zed Books.

Morrell, R., & Swart, S. (2005). Men in the classroom. *Agenda, 63*(49), 24–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/4066487

Naicker, S., & Mestry, R. (2013). Leadership styles and teacher morale. *South African Journal of Education, 33*(2), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v33n2a565

Nadarasa, S., & Thuraisingam, T. (2012). Autocratic leadership in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration, 50*(4), 500–515. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211235762

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Peker, M., Inandi, Y., & Gilic, F. (2018). Effects of authoritarian leadership on teacher morale. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 46*(5), 765–779. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217723636

Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew, G. (2012). Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2: Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual Therapy, 17*(5), 378–384. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.math.2012.03.004

Purwanto, A., Wijayanti, L., Hyun, K., & Asbari, M. (2019). Hegemonic masculinity and leadership in education. *Journal of Educational Leadership, 8*(3), 33–45. https://dinastipub.org/DIJDBM

Ryan, M. (1998). Critical perspectives on leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 19*(7), 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437739810231308

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage.

Sobral, F., & Furtado, C. (2019). Post-heroic leadership and gendered perspectives. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 40*(2), 187–202. https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-01-2018-0012

Sibanda, L. (2017). Understanding distributed leadership in South African schools: Challenges and prospects. *Issues In Educational Research, 27*(3), 567–581. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.009011116124431

Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations, 62*(4), 537–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726708100364

Stogdill, R. M., & Bass, B. M. (1981). *Stogdill's handbook of leadership: A survey of theory and research* (3rd ed.). Free Press.

Tourish, D. (2014). *Leadership, more or less? A critical review of the evidence*. Routledge.

Thompson, G., & Glaso, L. (2015). Leadership and followership: Theoretical and practical perspectives. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 9*(2), 34–45. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21301

Vroom, V. H., & Jago, A. G. (2007). The role of the situation in leadership. *American Psychologist, 62*(1), 17–24. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.1.17

Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.